

Africa and Sri Lanka Lions victorious in Cricket Masala 2007

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Offstick Productions presented the second Commonwealth Bank Cricket Masala over the weekend of April 14-15 in perfect weather at Memorial and Grahame Thomas Ovals in Bankstown. The event featured international food and entertainment and a 2 day 6-A-Side cricket festival featuring the best community cricketers and SpeedBlitz Blues imports. On the Sunday in a suspenseful rain-delayed final, Team Africa took out the Mini World Cup with a win over the fancied Bradman Foundation by 16 runs. In the Saturday community competition, the giant killing Sri Lanka Lions defeated the highly fancied NSW Tamils team in a closely contested final and securing the wildcard qualifying spot in the Sunday tournament.

The victorious African team captained by Kevin Pillay, included Speedblitz Blue Murray Creed, current Zimbabwe player Vusi Sibanda, ex Zimbabwe fast bowler Eddo Brandes, Parramatta's Neshen Munusamy, South Sydney's Shane Pargeter and Campbelltown's Ardil Domingo. Sibanda, who recently returned from national duty in the World Cup in the West Indies, scored 30 runs off an over in the semi finals against Pakistan including 4 towering sixes. He was thrilled with the win "I was so disappointed that Zimbabwe did not make the super 8's of the World Cup, but Africa's win today has brought a big smile to my face". Over 4000 people attended the festival over 2 days which featured a total of 149 sixes, over 30 lost balls and one smashed windscreen courtesy of a massive six by Pakistan's Usman Khawaja.

In the Sunday Mini World Cup, Bangladesh captain Naiian Yazdani won the bowler of the tournament with 5 wickets for 26 runs. Nick Watkins from the Bradman Foundation was awarded player of the tournament and also cleaned up the best batsman and Concorde VFR high flying 6's trip to India



India captain Lisa Sthalekar



award with 11 sixes in total. Watkins who is Australia's premier deaf cricketer was thrilled to be part of the day "What a great concept and a positive day. The cricket was of the highest standard and my Bradman Foundation team mates were great to play with. A big thankyou to the organisers for their originality and we look forward to next year".

In the Community Competition, Bankstown Sports Club was knocked out in the qualifiers of the Saturday tournament and will no doubt learn from the experience. Sri Lanka Lions cleaned up the awards with Player of the Tournament going to Kasun Bulathsinghala, best bowler to Vinayak Sasitharan and best batsman going to Pradeep Vidanapathirana with 115 runs. Pradeep also tied the Most 6's award with Afghanistan's Aziz Naibkhil and Pakistan Sports Club's Aamir Abbasi with 6 each. NSW Breakers womens team did not win any matches against the men but won the spectators hearts with their valiant efforts. Lisa Sthalekar, the Australian women's vice captain enjoyed herself "It's a beautiful day and great to see everybody come together at the end of the season" Lisa's Indian team performed credibly but did not make it through to the next round.

Gambhir Watts, of the event was satisfied with the day observed; The cricket was unbelievable and I was amazed by some of the Crowd catches including the winner Sadan and Karmakonde who won a trip to the Gold Coast for 2 for the first crowd catch after 1pm. Thanks to all of our sponsors for their support and we will be back next year with more innovations". India had a strong team with skipper Lisa Sthalekar, the former Indian Test cricketer Subroto Banerjee and the talented Rohit Ramanathan, Danny Batra, Abhinav Mathur and Abhay Venkat. But they disappointed, winning only one of the three matches and failed to qualify for the semi-final.

Led by Usman Khawaja, Pakistan made a strong bid to enter the final, but they lost to Africa in the semis after a titanic struggle. Africa scored 3-86, the highest team total for the day and an amazing total off just 5 overs. The current Zimbabwean Test cricketer Vusi Sibanda



Name Text



who had earlier scintillated in the 2007 World Cup scored an astounding 30 runs in an over including four sixes. Pakistan bravely replied with 1-73, with Usman smacking sixes all over the Steve & Mark Waugh Stand, smashing a car windscreen in the process! Thus 159 runs were rattled up in 10 overs, an exhilarating run-rate of 16 runs an over! The final was reduced to 3 overs per team because of rain. Africa made 1-45 and beat Bradman Foundation's reply (2-32).

The talented Zimbabwean star Vusi Sibanda who represented champion team Africa was the most popular cricketer in the Competition. "I was so disappointed that Zimbabwe did not make it to Super 8 in the 2007 World Cup in the Windies. But today has brought a big smile to my face."

But it was the willowy Nick Watkins of Bradman Foundation who scooped awards for being the best batsman and was voted the most valuable player of the Championship. He also top scored with an individual score of 48. Nick and his twin brother Andrew play for Parramatta in first grade and along with Bradman Foundation teammate are 3 of Australia's premier deaf cricketers having represented on a number of occasions.. Nick also won the Concorde VFR high flying trip to India for hitting most sixes, 11 in one day. Good on you, Nick the high flyer.

The Sydney Morning Herald of April 14 previewed Cricket Masala by titling the story: *Cricket spiked with masala, and a staid game gets sixier*. And "sixier" it did get with 78 sixes skied on 14th and 71 on 15th April. Many of them were huge hits, going over the Stadium and crashing down with a bang. Thirty balls were lost as towering sixes followed each other in rapid succession.

Dignitaries in attendance included former Australian test cricketers Alan Davidson and Lenny Pascoe, Cricket NSW CEO David Gilbert, Consul General of India Hon. Sujan Chinoy, Mayor of Bankstown Ms Tanya Mihailuk and Hon. Darryl Melham, Federal MP for Banks who was present on both days. Mr Melham commented "What a fantastic event and what joy you have brought to a lot of families". Rina Hore, Direction Sir Don Bradman Foundation and Cricket NSW, John Faulkner, were amongst a ray of other dignitaries who graced the event over two days. Ms Lisa Cartright, General Manager, International Customer Services, Commonwealth Bank graced the occasion with her day long stay and led the prize distribution ceremony in the late evening on Sunday.

The running commentaries and comedy by MC's Paran Nadeswaran, 19 and Rajith Raghavan informed and entertained as they interviewed cricketers, dancers and VIPs with a touch of Test class and humour, ably assisted by Deepthi Raghavan and DJ Neil. Cricket editor Kersi Meher Homji and Patrick Skene contributed rich editorial for the Match Program designed by Prem Gangadharan and Utkarsh Doshi. In original articles Kersi highlighted the world class strength of the NSW



representative team Speedblitz Blues, and cast light on performances of our talented female cricketers. Divya Raghavan managed operations for the event with Utkarsh Doshi, who led a team of Bhavan volunteers. Rajesh Katakdhond assisted with luncheons, and we are grateful for his efforts and those of all other volunteers who helped with the event. Our special thanks to Tournament Director Sutha Siva and his team from NSW Tamils who ran 42 games played over two days at two venues with pinpoint punctuality and kept immaculate statistics.

Lucky spectator Sadanand Karmatokonde won a trip to Gold Coast for two for taking the first crowd catch. Shamima Begum of Lakemba won the door prize consisting of trip for two to India including airfare five nights' stay in Delhi, Agra, Jaipur and ground transportation with the courtesy of India Tourism Sydney, Malaysian Airlines and Taj Hotel Resorts and Palaces.

Senior Cricket Journalist Alex Brown wrote in the Sydney Morning Herald on April 21, 2007 " The important administrative lessons to be taken from Cricket Masala were not from the games being played. Those are the domain of players and coaches. Rather, the moral of this story is how organisers driven by passion, as opposed to profit, can inspire the masses with an event authentic, fun, and without the unmistakable scent of Dettol. Informal, spontaneous. Fans treated as fans, not commodities. Boundaries lined with cooks from local curry houses, dishing up baltis hotter than a Greg Chappell effigy. Singers belting out tunes in English and Hindi (think Brett Lee in his post-Six & Out phase, but better). Between the singing of the crowd and the singeing of the balti, the carnival at Bankstown Oval was by far and away my cricketing highlight of the past few months.



Combined Teams from Saturday Community Competition



Combined Teams from Sunday Mini World Cup



Teams from Saturday Community Competition



Teams from Sunday Mini World Cup



From left - right: Ram Chhabra (The Indian), Daryl Melham (Federal MP for banks), David Gilbert (CEO Cricket NSW), Tanya Meholic (Mayor Bankstown City), Lisa Cartwright (General Manager ICS Commonwealth Bank), Gambhir Watts, Sutha Sivan, Patrick Skene



- Kersi Meher Homji (Indian Down Under) and Patrick Skene